

The Dragon's Cavern.

The evening of March 10, 18—, was dark and gloomy. The clouds were hurrying across the sky.

"We must hasten, Sheila," said Jerry Sullivan to his sweetheart, as he thrust a long iron rod down into the hatch of Costello bay, in Connemara, in search of the small kegs of illicit whisky which he had hidden in the sand two weeks previously. Sheila was walking in the water up to her ankles and helping her lover dislodge the liquor. The spume of the sea smote her fair cheeks and the wind played with her dark hair as she threw a keg of whisky far up the beach.

"That's ten and the last, Jerry," said Sheila, as she ran up the beach, and drew from its hiding place in the bog a frail canoe made of canvas, with light ash ribs. Dragging the boat down to the water's edge, they placed the ten small kegs along the keel of the boat, ran her bow first into the water, and jumped in as the boat slid gently out into the bay.

They were on their way to the Aran islands, ten miles away, to be married by Father O'Donohue, on St. Patrick's day. Both Jerry and his sweetheart were skillful with the oars, having been reared at the water's edge. They had chosen St. Patrick's day for their nuptials because of their abounding faith in the kindly patronage of the renowned saint. Scarcely had they passed the shelter of the island of Trebane and entered the broad bay of Galway, when Jerry, looking backward, saw a boat containing four men in hot pursuit.

"God help us, Sheila; the police are after us!" he exclaimed.

"Pray to the blessed St. Patrick, Jerry," said Sheila, "for we have both men and the sea to fight this night."

Bending their muscular backs to the oars, the frail craft fairly flew at the impulse. The rising wind did all it could to impede their progress, but on they sped until darkness fell. It was a mail race, with love and romance on one side and the law on the other, and the police boat was slowly gaining. Every nerve and muscle was strained in the race. The little oars bent until they threatened to break. Jerry's cap blew off and went bobbing away over the waves. Sheila's hair blew out like a black banner on the wind. The salt spray swept over them in sheets.

"I have the rifle here, Sheila. Shall I try a shot?" said Jerry.

"No, no, Jerry," she replied; "that would be murder. Pray to the blessed St. Patrick and pull."

The police boat was only fifty feet astern, and they had already been called on to surrender when the boat grounded in a cove at the upper end of the largest Aran island, and they jumped into the water and disappeared in the darkness, leaving the boat and its contents in the hands of the police.

The islands of Aran are situated in the bay of Galway, near the western coast of Ireland. The largest of the islands, Inishmore, is nine miles long. It is a desolate, inhospitable rock in the sea, where famine is a frequent visitor. The illicit whisky distillers in Connemara, ten miles away, make the island their base of supplies. The western side of the island facing the sea consists of a stupendous escarpment of rock, rising sheer from the water, varying from 200 to 400 feet in height. At intervals along the cliff holes have been forced through the rock by the attrition of the water. When the wind blows hard from the west, the water is forced through these holes and bursts in a column fifty feet thick through the surface of the rock, frequently to the height of 100 feet. It is heart-quaking to see one of these "spouting holes," as they are called by the islanders, in full play.

Bryan Kilmartin, the strongest man in the island, at the time our story opens, lived in a cottage a few hundred feet from the edge of the cliff. In the rear of the cottage there was a jagged hole in the rock fifty feet wide and of unknown depth. No man had the courage to examine the hole, for there issued from it such strange noises of growling and belching that the superstitious islanders believed the cavern to be occupied by a dragon. There was a legend on the island to the effect that when St. Patrick banished the dragons from Ireland, the biggest of the dragons, 600 feet long, swam across the bay of Galway to Aran. As the good saint was hot on the dragon's trail the beast jumped down the hole in Kilmartin's yard and had been imprisoned there ever since. Bryan erected a high stone wall around the hole, and Mrs. Kilmartin used it as a receptacle for refuse. A few venturesome visitors from the mainland peered timorously into the yawning chasm, but the islanders left it to the care of its dragon inhabitant.

The evening previous to St. Patrick's day was marked by a storm of exceptional violence. A northeast gale was raging. All day the big waves had been hurled against the gigantic cliffs of the island, beating like fine shot against the windows of Kilmartin's cottage.

"Tis a wild night," said Bryan, peering out upon the storm-tossed beach. "God help the poor fellow that's out of doors this night! Ellen, more turf."

Scarcely had Bryan seated himself beside the glowing turf fire when he heard a sharp metallic sound, as of iron, striking the window pane. This was followed by a low whistle, which brought Bryan to his feet. It was the danger signal known to all the dwellers on this desolate rock in the ocean. Bryan seized his cap and vanished in the darkness. When he had walked 100 feet, he heard the whistle again from the shelter of a stone wall, and was joined by a man muffled to the eyes by a heavy coat—a tall, heavily built man, panting from recent exertion. He was Jerry Sullivan. From behind a rock he drew a woman wrapped in a peasant's coat.

"Tis Sheila Malone, of Trebane, Bryan," said he. "We came across the bay this evening to be married by Father

O'Donohue on Patrick's day. We landed at the upper end of the island with ten kegs of whisky, but the police captured the boat and the whisky. We have been hiding in the rocks. They are searching the island for me. This is the third time Bryan. If they catch me, I am good for three years. Sheila will be safe with your wife. They won't touch her. Could you put me in the cave?"

Bryan hesitated. The cave was situated in the face of the cliff 100 feet from the top. No one but the most daring climbers had ever tried to reach it, and then only in daylight.

"Could you do it, Jerry?" asked Bryan. "A fearful job; almost sure death."

"Tis a fearful chance," said Jerry, "and I'm willing to try it. The cave is the only place where I would be safe."

"True for you, Jerry," said Bryan. "They could not get you there. If you have made up your mind to go, I'll do all I can to help you. Go over the cliff and wait there. Three or four of us will join you in an hour."

"Oh, Jerry, Jerry, don't go, acushla! You are going to your death! What will I do without you?" moaned Sheila.

"Arrah, don't talk like that, mavourneen!" replied Jerry. "You'll take the heart out of me. Take her, Bryan, till I come back." And with an embrace and a whispered word Jerry was off into the night.

"Mary," said Bryan to his wife as he entered the cottage, "put some sods of turf, a piece of bacon and some potatoes in a bag and ask no questions. 'Ellen,' he continued to his daughter, "you go out and get Rafferty, O'Brien, Malloy and Reardon. Whisper that I want them and they're to say nothing."

The women obeyed without question. Half an hour later four grim, resolute men sat around Kilmartin's fire.

"Poor fellow!" said O'Brien, alluding to Sullivan after Bryan had told them the story. "I'm afraid Sheila will never have him here again. I wouldn't go down that rock tonight for forty women. Hear that now!"

The group leaned forward and listened. Above the howling of the storm at intervals could be heard the thunderous boom of the surge beating against the cliffs a quarter of a mile away. The cottage rocked in the fury of the gale.

"He'll never get into that cave," said Malloy. "The wind will blow him away like a feather. Can't we find some other place to hide him?"

All the other hiding places on the island were carefully gone over, but as each was known to the coast guard it was reluctantly abandoned. It was nearing midnight when the five men, two of them staggering under the weight of a long rope, crept out into the storm. The wind howled and the rain drenched them as they toiled along to the cliff. They were forced to stumble in the darkness, as a lantern would have attracted the attention of a coast guard. But so familiar were the men with the land that they soon arrived at the point in the cliff just over the cave.

"Put these matches in your tobacco pouch," said Bryan to Sullivan as the latter emerged from under a rock where he had been hiding. "Here, boys, help me tie this bag on his back! Malloy, take off his shoes. Now, Jerry, do you still insist? There's ten chances against you to one for me."

"Tis my only hope," replied Jerry, resolutely, although his voice trembled as he crossed himself devoutly and prayed to St. Patrick for success. Each man shook his head as Sullivan lay down, face to the rock, seizing the rope, and began to work himself gradually over the brink of the precipice. Just before he disappeared Bryan said:

"We'll lower you twenty feet. Then we'll stop a second. That'll be five stops you will make before you reach the cave. Goodby and good luck. We'll see how you're getting along after the storm."

Sullivan disappeared. Sitting in the loop at the end of the rope he felt himself sliding down the face of the cliff. The waves roared in an awful caldron beneath him. The rope began to twist. To overcome this he placed his stockings against the rock and pushed himself out over the abyss. The rope was lowered gently over twenty feet, then came a pause, and at each step Jerry forced himself outward like a living pendulum over the snarling yeast below. Drenched with spray and deafened by the horrible clamor of the elements, he kept going down, all the time swinging outward and inward until he swung, stunned and exhausted, into the mouth of the cave. When he had scrambled to his feet, he tied a sod of turf to the rope as a signal that he had arrived safely, and a minute later it was drawn to the surface.

Sullivan found himself in a hole in the rock about ten feet square. The darkness was intense, but he managed to feel his way along, finding that the cave tended diagonally upward and inward. Striking a match, the light was reflected from the walls of a large chamber. Sullivan started a fire with the turf which he carried in the bag, dried his clothing, then lay down to fall asleep and dreamed that Sheila was rocking home in an enormous cradle.

When the fugitive awoke, refreshed, he fried some bacon on a stick and roasted potatoes in the embers of the fire. Then crawling down toward the mouth of the cave he found that the storm had increased in violence and that the waves were gradually invading his rocky prison. This did not alarm him, however, as he thought the storm would surely abate in a short time. He put more turf on the fire, lit his pipe and toasted his shins, meanwhile indulging in those fond anticipations so dear to the hearts of lovers. He saw the face of his beloved in the glowing embers and felt the caressing touch of her hands.

Growing tired of his enforced inactivity he made a torch of some dried grass which he found in the cave and started to explore his prison. To his amazement

he found that the cave connected with a rocky shaft leading to the surface through which he could see the sky. Returning to the fire a look of terror came into his eyes as he saw a rivulet of water steal up to the embers and heard the hot coals hiss angrily at the intrusion. Glancing around he saw that the floor of the cave was rapidly turning into a lake. Each booming assault of the sea was followed by a deeper influx of water until he stood ankle deep in the rippling tide. There was a horrible fascination for the fugitive in the insidious increase of the flood. It flowed so gently, each minute growing deeper and deeper until it reached his knees. The darkness was so intense that he could not see his hand held close before his face. But as each wave receded he could hear the water trickle away in faint gurgles. Then there came a horrible bursting roar and the flood encompassed him again, reaching his thighs.

The storm was at its height as the gray dawn of St. Patrick's day began to break over the heaving waters. A hundred miles at sea a giant wave had sped eastward urged by a 70 knot gale. It raced along, gaining in momentum with every mile and swallowing the lesser waves to add to its bulk, until it assumed the proportions of a tidal wave. With the thunder of a bursting planet it crashed against the cliffs of Aran. Sullivan heard its mighty impact, he felt the greedy flood tear him from the rock, there was an awful roaring in his ears and like a chip in a mill race he was borne along in the heart of the torrent.

It was a night of terrible anxiety in Kilmartin's cottage, but what alarmed the inmates more than anything were the awful noises issuing from the dragon's cavern. Never had such sounds come from it before.

"The storm has weakened the bastle!" exclaimed Mrs. Kilmartin. "We'll all be swallowed before the mornin'."

In terror the family fell upon their knees and prayed for the protection of St. Patrick against the dragon, which was expected to make its appearance every minute. Just as the grey dawn broke in mist and spume over the island the big wave hurled itself against the cliffs. There was such grumbling and hissing from the cavern that the inmates of the cottage threw themselves upon their faces, while from the hole there burst a cataract of water which inundated the cottage and burst open the door. When Bryan mustered up courage to get upon his feet, he uttered an exclamation of surprise and delight for there across the threshold lay the body of Jerry Sullivan. His right leg was broken, yet he was alive but unconscious.

"Tis my Jerry and not the dragon," screamed Sheila, taking the head of her lover in her lap. "The blessed St. Patrick has made a hole between the cave and the dragon's cavern and the water brought him back to me. Glory be, but I'll say 40 aves a day to the good saint for the rest of my life."

THE SHAMROCK.

Yacht That Is to Try for America's Cup Ready to Launch.

W. Fife, Jr., the yacht designer, has been in London frequently during the last few weeks studying the lines of Sir Thomas Lipton's Shamrock as she grows into shape. He has not modified his plans in the slightest detail, so he is evidently as pleased with her appearance as an actual boat as he was with the designs.

The workmen have now succeeded in surmounting the worst difficulties in working the manganese plater, several of which were ruined during the first attempts to do so. But the work is now proceeding smoothly, though slowly. It is expected, however, that the yacht could be ready if defired by the end of May. The name, Golden Rod, which it is said will be given to the America's Cup defender, is rather startling to Englishmen, most of whom never heard of the American flower. The Yachting World says:

"No fault can be found with the name; but, all the same, it is unpleasantly suggestive of a beating for Sir Thomas Lipton."

The owner of the Shamrock will soon name the date of the launch of the cup challenger.

HINTS FOR GIRLS.

Never be unfair in your play. Never be discourteous to old people. Never talk back to your father or mother.

Never run after the boys. If there is any running to be done, let them do it. Never accept gifts and favors and then straightway forget the kindness of the giver.

Never get silly over beaux. The only boys you need care about are made of ribbon.

Never ill-treat any one because of poverty. Character, not wealth, is the true standard of merit.

Never forget that God made you to be the most companionable and agreeable of all created creatures.

Never quarrel. Quarreling will steal the sweetness from your disposition and the beauty from your face.

Never be continually trying to say sharp, cutting things. Few admire and none love a spiteful tongue.

Never be in a hurry to become a young lady. You will soon discover that old Father Time needs no urging.

Never tell tales. There is no more despicable creature on the face of the earth than a scandal-monger.

Never wait for your mother to ask you to help her. Offer your services when you see she has need of them.

Never be ungrateful. If any one does you a kindness show that you appreciate it, even if it does cost you a little trouble.

Never imagine that every young man who acts as if your society was pleasant to him has fallen dead in love with you.

Never flirt. Men look upon a flirt in much the same way as a baby does upon a rattle box—as a thing to be played with.

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